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1962/06/07

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

T.S. T.

7 June 1962
7:10 PM

Participants: Mike Forrestal
Roger Hilsman

Mr. Forrestal opened the conversation saying the Secretary of State would not be able to read the papers on Laos until Sunday and so probably there would be a 5 PM Monday meeting with principals either at State or Defense. Mr. Hilsman said that Governor Harriman had called him about an 11 A.M. Monday meeting with the Secretary. Mr. Forrestal then retraced his steps and included that time, then finished off with the time being uncertain but they would meed with the President on Tuesday, unless it turns bad in Vientiane over the week end.

Mr. Forrestal than reminded Mr. Hilsman of the book that he had assembled having all the various and sundry memoranda he had sent into the President, and said he sent the same material to McNamara with a note that the papers included therein are what the President has seen and he felt that Mr. McNamara may be interested in the material and could submit comments if he chose. He then said that Bill Bundy's ability as a reporter was very disorganized so said that the Secretary of Defense had mentioned something about the source of the President's military advisers; that he didn't think it fair that people bootlegged things to the President, to which Mr. Forrestal said he replied that Mr. Hilsman didn't send them to the White House, that he, Mr. Forrestal, in his position on the White House Staff canvasses all over and gets cooperation from the various agencies; he tries to be fair; that he would be very glad to include anything that Defense produced when they do produce it, but that so far they haven't sent any papers. And Mr. Forrestal said he asked Mr. Bundy to present to the Secretary of Defense in as nice a way as possible the above facts and about Roger Hilsman giving him military advice because he was not ~~giving him advice~~ Taking the initiative, and it should be explained to the Secretary properly.

Mr. Forrestal then said he talked it over with Mac Bundy who even felt stronger about it - took a stronger view -- that he would like nothing better than to have a fight on the subject and will do it if it seems to be necessary. That it is the President who wants to have these facts debated.

Mr. Hilsman then explained how he came to understand and like Mr. Kennedy long before Wisconsin. That whenever he dealt with any of his staff he became aware that he consulted everybody in the field and I liked that and it didn't let me feel that he was solely dependent upon me.

Mr. Forrest then explained that one of his jobs is to develop more sources - more persuasive (Mr. H's papers are); that he had a great problem getting Defense People to coordinate - work faster and with more precision.

over

8:11

Mr. Forrestal then said spoke briefly to Alexis Johnson about it so that Bundy wouldn't be calling him or someone from Defense - and AJ seems to want to protect you, he said, we must protect Roger; particularly so that he doesn't stop sending the Secretary his real ideas and Mr. Forrestal said he didn't think that would be a problem. Mr. Hilsman said he must do something - find a way - to do something about ~~his~~ MacNamara's feelings.

Mr. Forrestal said one problem with Bob McNamara was his view which he is taking -- the intuitive position; defensive, taking everything into consideration, the domestic etc . etc. about Laos and he can't see going to war about it; feels that tends to bring in the escalation of the requirements. And he said he had no argument with that.

Mr. Hilsman said in reply to that that the Secretary tends to defer to military rather than arguing political affects of the loss of Laos. It would be terribly persuasive if he did; that is what should be done. Get into debate, both sides, get into each others domains.

Mr. Forrestal said he was going to conduct a campaign through General Taylor on the Defense Department to see if they can't think of anything for Stage 1 that they would like to suggest.

Mr. Hilsman spokke of the paper he was working on ---intermediate steps.

Mr. Forrestal said he would pass this one in and through General Taylor and he felt it would be much more successful.

They thanked each other and said goodby.